

Amendments to the Claims

1. (currently amended) A clothing article for attaching apparatus with increased availability and better weight distribution, the clothing article comprising:
 - a. a front portion including separate left and right front side portions each having a shoulder portion and a waist portion,
 - b. a rear portion separate from but attachable by releasable attachment devices to the front side portions at each shoulder and adjacent a waist region on either lateral side of the clothing article, each attachment device being length adjustable, and
 - c. at least one attachment device for the releasable attachment of equipment located on at least one of the portions.
2. (original) A clothing article according to claim 1 wherein the clothing article is a mining vest.
3. (original) A clothing article according to claim 1, further comprising a belt wherein the belt is releasably attached to a lower portion of the clothing article to provide additional support for equipment attached to either the belt or the front or rear portions.
4. (currently amended) A clothing article for attaching apparatus with increased availability and better weight distribution, the clothing article comprising:
 - a. a front portion including separate left and right front side portions each having a shoulder portion and a waist portion,
 - b. a rear portion separate from but attachable by attachment devices to the front side portions at each shoulder and adjacent a waist region on either lateral side of the clothing article,
 - c. at least one attachment device for the releasable attachment of equipment located on at least one of the portions, and
 - d. a belt wherein the belt is releasably attached to a lower portion of the clothing article to provide additional support for equipment attached to either the belt or the front or rear portions;

~~as claimed in claim 3~~ wherein the at least one attachment device is associated with the clothing article for the releasable attachment of equipment, the attachment device comprising a locking portion for attachment to clothing article, the locking portion having a bore, and a resilient spring plate which is removably located in the bore, the spring plate having a shoulder portion to abut the locking portion when in the bore, an angled portion to bias the spring plate and a locking rebate movable between a first locked position where the locking rebate abuts a lower edge of the bore to lock the spring plate in place within the bore, and a second released position where the locking rebate is free from the lower edge of the bore, one of the locking portion or the spring plate attached to the clothing article and the other attached to the equipment to allow releasable attachment of the equipment to the clothing article.

5. (previously presented) A clothing article according to claim 4 wherein the attachment device comprises a locking portion for attachment to clothing article, the locking portion having a bore, and a resilient spring plate attached to the equipment for use by the user which is removably located in the bore, the spring plate having a shoulder portion to abut the locking portion when in the bore, an angled portion to bias the spring plate and a locking rebate movable between a first locked position where the locking rebate abuts a lower edge of the bore to lock the spring plate in place within the bore, and a second released position where the locking rebate is free from the lower edge of the bore.

6. (previously presented) A clothing article according to claim 1 wherein the separate left and right front side portions are releasably attachable to respective sides of the back portion which is a unitary portion.

7. (original) A clothing article according to claim 6 further comprising a belt wherein the belt is releasably attached to a lower section of the back portion and the belt includes a lumbar support belt which is adapted to be wrapped about a wearer's lower torso.

8. (original) A clothing article according to claim 7 wherein at least one portion of the lumbar support belt includes at least one attachment means to attach the front side portions of the clothing article to the back portion of the clothing article to provide a size adjustable clothing article.

9. (original) A clothing article according to claim 3 further comprising a safety harness releasably attachable to one or more harness straps associated with the clothing article and/or the belt.

10. (original) A clothing article according to claim 1 further comprising a water storage or hydration system associated a portion of the clothing article.

11. (previously presented) A clothing article worn by miners for attaching apparatus with increased availability and better weight distribution which comprises at least one front portion and at least one rear portion, at least one attachment means for the releasable attachment of equipment located on at least one of the portions, and a belt wherein the belt is releasably attached to a lower portion of the clothing article to provide additional support for equipment attached to either the belt or the front or rear portions, and wherein the at least one attachment means is associated with the clothing article for the releasable attachment of equipment, the attachment means comprising a locking portion, the locking portion having a bore, and a resilient spring plate which is removably located in the bore, the spring plate having a shoulder portion to abut the locking portion when in the bore, an angled portion to bias the spring plate and a locking rebate movable between a first locked position where the locking rebate abuts a lower edge of the bore to lock the spring plate in place within the bore, and a second released position where the locking rebate is free from the lower edge of the bore, one of the locking portion or the spring plate attached to the clothing article and the other attached to the equipment to allow releasable attachment of the equipment to the clothing article.

12. (previously presented) A clothing article according to claim 11 wherein the attachment means comprises a locking portion, the locking portion having a bore, and a resilient spring plate attached to the equipment for use by the user which is removably

located in the bore, the spring plate having a shoulder portion to abut the locking portion when in the bore, an angled portion to bias the spring plate and a locking rebate movable between a first locked position where the locking rebate abuts a lower edge of the bore to lock the spring plate in place within the bore, and a second released position where the locking rebate is free from the lower edge of the bore.